

working people could lose the pensions they were promised by up to 60 percent cuts in those pensions. Congress needs to act before the end of the year to make sure that no one in America in a multi-employer pension plan will see their pension cut.

Those are real issues impacting real people, but there are more. There was an article recently in the Washington Post, and it said that because of major cuts to the Social Security Administration, people with disabilities are not getting their claims processed in a timely manner. The result was that in 1 year, if you can believe it, 10,000 people with disabilities died before they got their claims processed.

What the Republicans have been very active on is making sure that the Social Security Administration does not get the funding it needs, which means that it is harder for people who have retired and people who have disabilities to get the information they need or the claims that they have processed in a timely manner. We must make sure that every senior and person with a disability gets treated with dignity. We have to restore adequate funding to the Social Security Administration.

One of the great outrages that currently is taking place in this country and really is quite beyond belief is that at a time when we live in a competitive global economy and when we need the best educated workforce in the world to be able to do the new jobs that are being created, which require more education, we have over 40 million people in our country who have left college or graduate school in debt and sometimes deeply in debt. I am talking about people I have met who have gone to medical school or dental school and are \$300,000 or \$400,000 in debt. People graduate college \$100,000 or \$150,000 in debt. This is a crisis that is impacting millions of people. It is impacting our entire economy. It is an issue that must be addressed. Maybe, just maybe, before we give tax breaks to billionaires, we might want to significantly lower the debt burden so many people in this country have in their student debt.

This is the year 2017, soon to be 2018. This is the wealthiest country in the history of the world. Yet there are communities in Vermont, Utah, and communities all over this country that do not have adequate broadband service. How does a business start up in a community if that community does not have rapid broadband or good cell phone service? The answer is, it doesn't. It can't. That is one of the reasons why rural America is hurting so badly. We must invest in rural infrastructure to make sure every community in this country has quality, affordable broadband.

There is an opioid epidemic sweeping this country, impacting Vermont, my neighboring State of New Hampshire, West Virginia, Kentucky, and all parts of this country are seeing people dying from overdoses from opioids and heroin. This is an epidemic that must be

addressed. We can't simply walk out of here and leave people all across the country without the resources they need to treat people who are addicted and to prevent our young people from becoming addicts. We need to invest in treatment and prevention for the opioid epidemic.

As we speak, there are over 30,000 vacancies in the Veterans' Administration. That means that we have to make sure every veteran in this country who goes to the VA gets the quality and timely healthcare he or she needs. We can't turn our backs on the veterans. We have to invest in the VA.

The bottom line is that, as much as all of us would like to get out of Washington and go home, we simply cannot turn our backs on tens of millions of working people and people in the middle class. It is not good enough to pass tax breaks for billionaires and then leave town. So I hope the Republican leadership will immediately bring to this floor the legislation that we need to address the many crises facing the middle class of this country.

With that Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### TRIBUTE TO MARK E. MILLER

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today I wish to honor Mark E. Miller, for his distinguished public service and professional assistance to the Senate Finance Committee, as well as to the rest of Congress.

Mr. Miller served as the executive director of the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, or MedPAC, for the last 15 years. During that time, he dedicated himself to our country, ensuring Congress received impartial, data-driven, and sound policy advice to transform the Medicare Program while protecting our Nation's seniors and the disabled.

MedPAC was established by Congress in 1997 as part of the Balanced Budget Act. It is a nonpartisan agency that provides analysis and policy recommendations regarding the Medicare Program, including payment, beneficiary access to care, and quality of care for traditional fee-for-service Medicare and Medicare Advantage. As all of us know, the analysis we get from MedPAC is critical in how we, as Members of Congress, debate, address changes, and ultimately make improvements to the Medicare Program.

Throughout his service, Mr. Miller ensured that MedPAC consistently fulfilled its mission of providing objective, empirically driven policy analysis and advice to Congress.

Mr. Miller himself also testified, answered calls, and otherwise provided invaluable advice on complicated Medicare payment issues to both majority and minority leaders, Finance Committee chairmen and ranking members, as well as other committee members, and other Member offices regarding all things healthcare. Throughout his years of service, Mr. Miller has proven himself a trusted source of objective information.

Mr. Miller gave years of his life, including countless long nights, weekends, and early mornings to make sure Congress has the best and most reliable information it can get. In turn, that analysis has guided many ideas and recommendations into legislation that made its way to a President's desk for signature. Mr. Miller's professionalism, expertise, energy, patience, humor, and dedication make him an example to all of us as we work the process of designing and ultimately enacting legislation. Mark has been there from the beginning, watching an idea being born, helping to develop policy to achieve that idea, and providing valuable policy counsel as it works its way through the legislative process to ultimately becoming law.

Thanks to his sense of purpose, dedication, and love for this country, Mr. Miller should be seen as just as much an influence on our current Medicare policy as most Members in this body. Mark is a consummate professional, and he will be missed. I wish him all the very best as he takes the next steps in his successful career.

May we ever remember Mark's service, and may MedPAC ever be guided by the same sense of duty and purpose Mr. Miller instilled in his 15 years leading that organization.

#### TRIBUTE TO STEVE JOHNSON

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, Cesar Chavez, the great champion of justice and human dignity, once offered this advice about friendship: He said; "If you really want to make a friend, go to someone's house and eat with him. . . . The people who give you their food give you their heart."

The Senate Dining Room isn't Steve Johnson's house, but for the 22 years that he has worked there, Steve has poured his heart into his job, and he has become a friend—or at least a friendly face—to Senators, our families, staff members, and visitors.

As general manager of the Senate Dining Rooms and two other eateries in the Capitol, Steve works hard to create places where people who might not normally talk to each other can sit down at adjoining tables, eat a meal, and maybe swap stories or jokes.

In the Senate Dining Room, with its white linen table cloths and crystal chandeliers, you might see Republican and Democratic Senators and staff members asking after each other's families. In the refectory on the first floor, reporters and visitors to the Capitol stand in line together to grab a